



**HAL**  
open science

# Are self-transcendent emotions one big family? An empirical taxonomy of positive self-transcendent emotion labels

Angela Gaia F. Abatista, Florian Cova

## ► To cite this version:

Angela Gaia F. Abatista, Florian Cova. Are self-transcendent emotions one big family? An empirical taxonomy of positive self-transcendent emotion labels. Annual Research Forum (ARF), Nov 2022, Genève (Suisse), Switzerland. 2022. hal-04885646

**HAL Id: hal-04885646**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04885646v1>**

Submitted on 14 Jan 2025

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Copyright

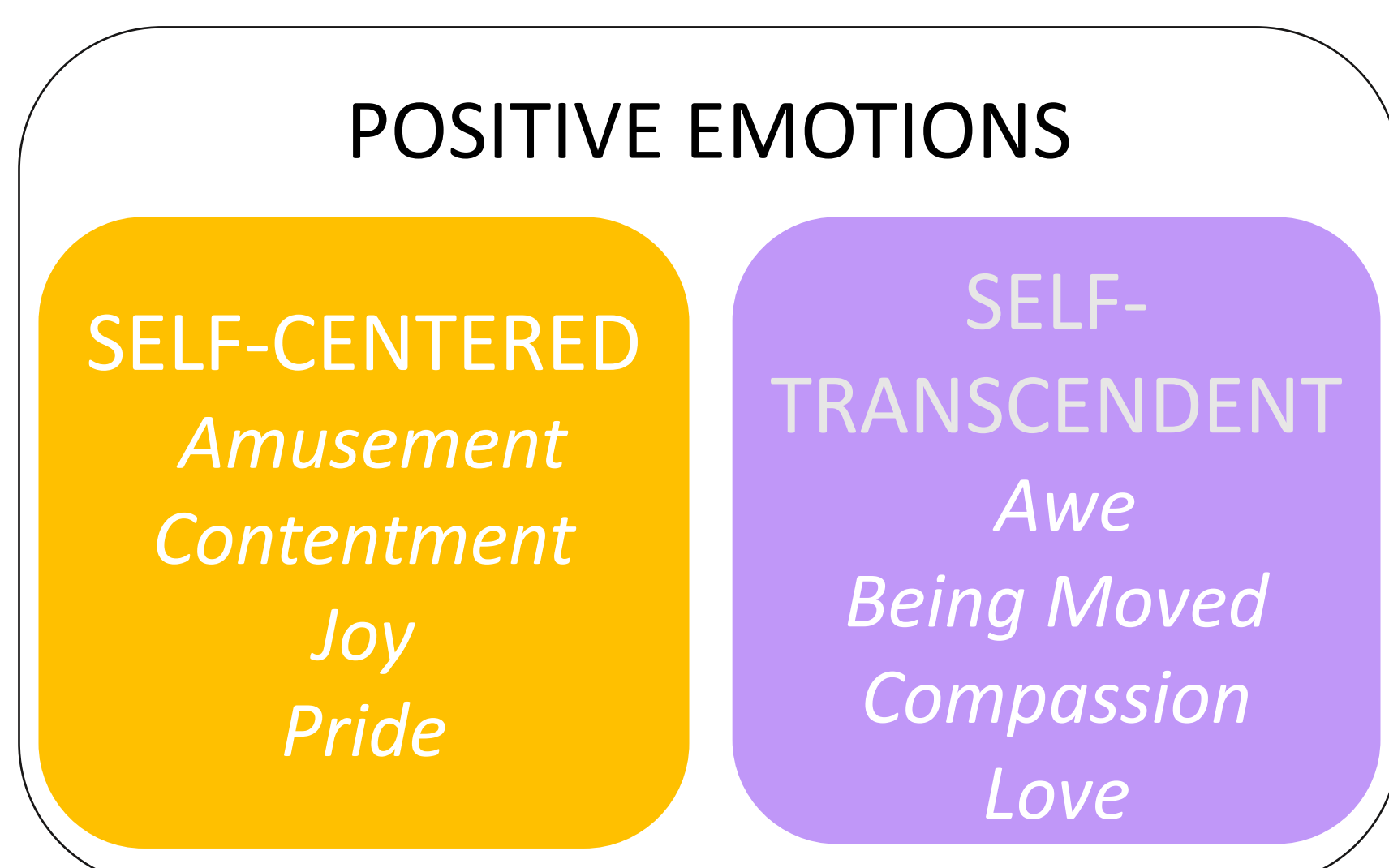
# Self-transcendent positive emotions are not one big family

## Three different ways of feeling good

Are self-transcendent emotions one big family?  
An empirical taxonomy of positive self-transcendent emotion labels

### INTRO

The standard picture\*



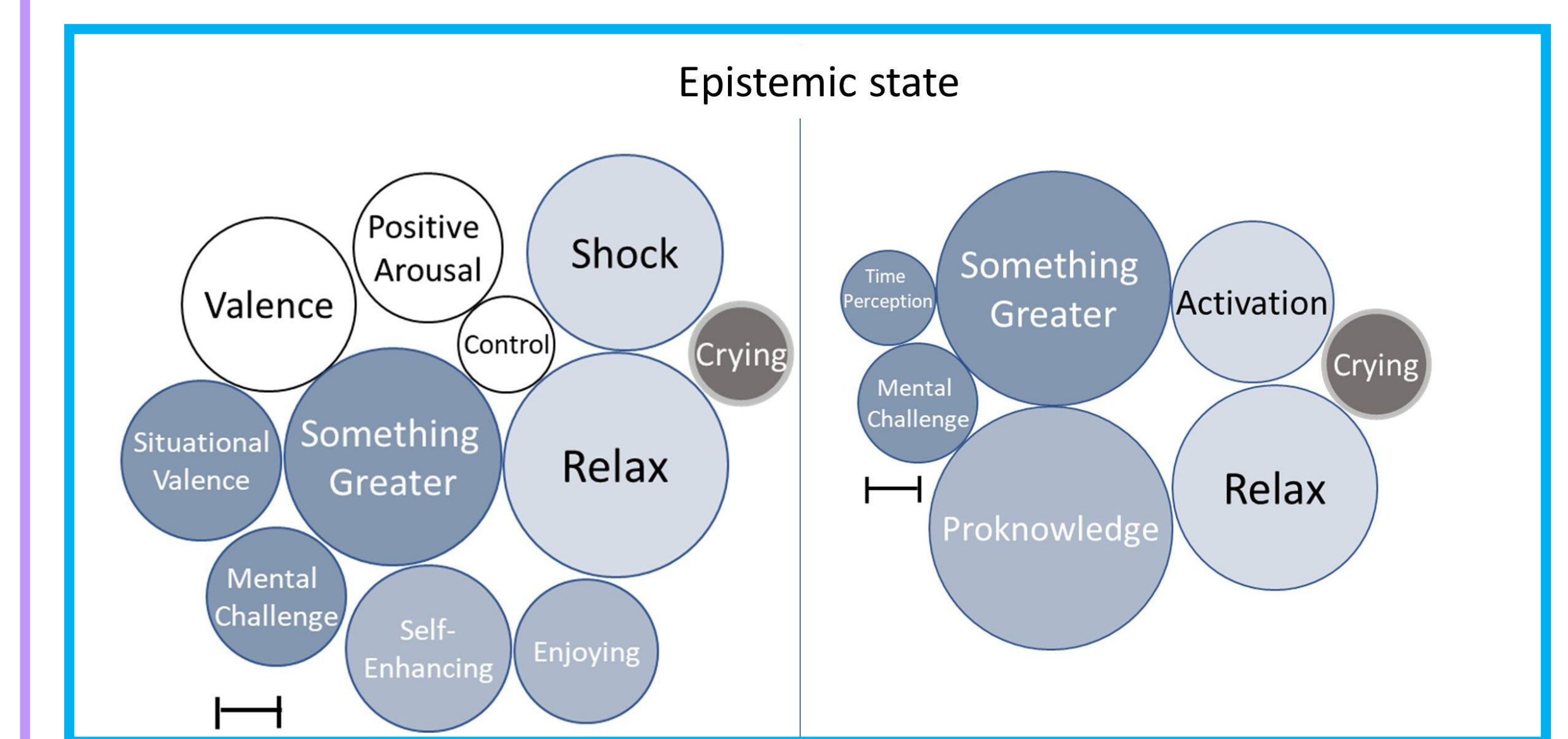
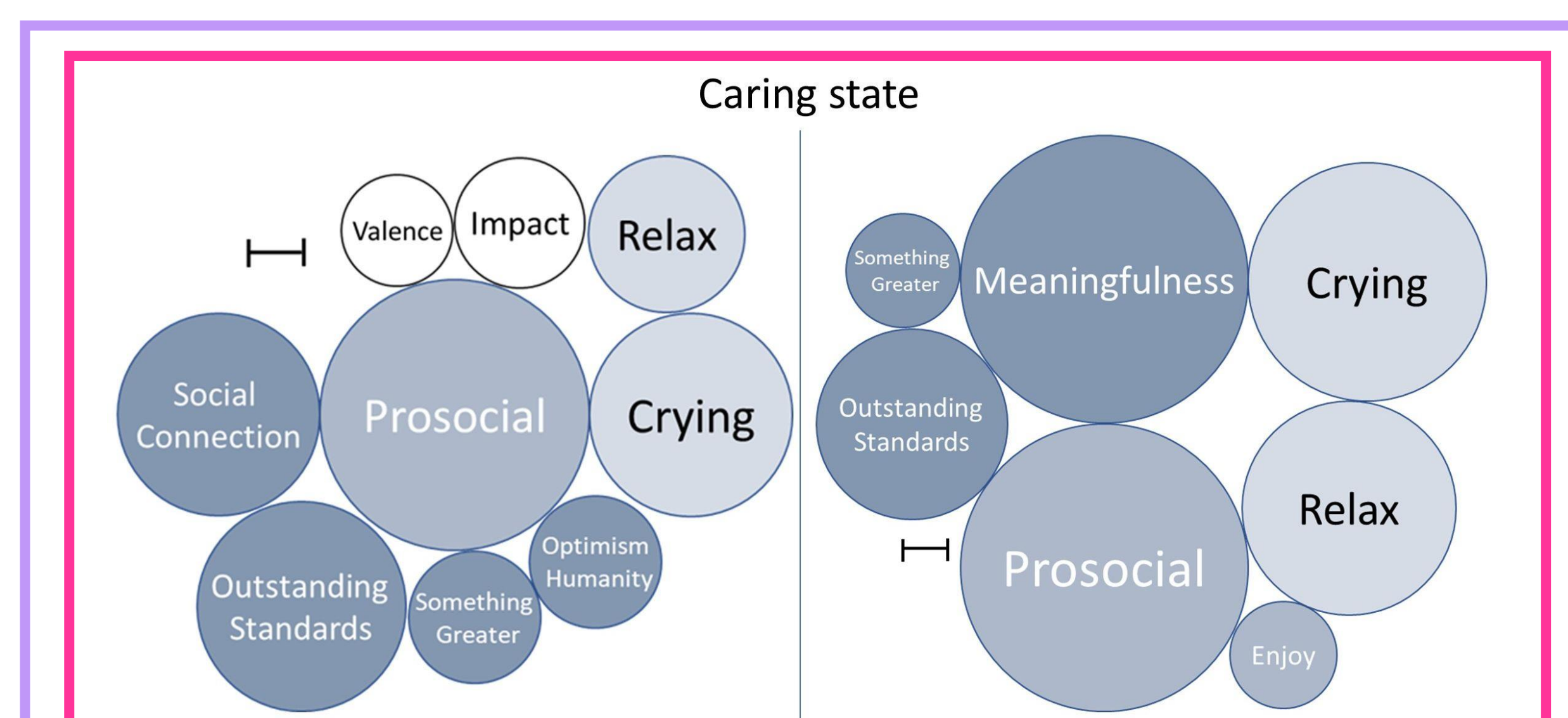
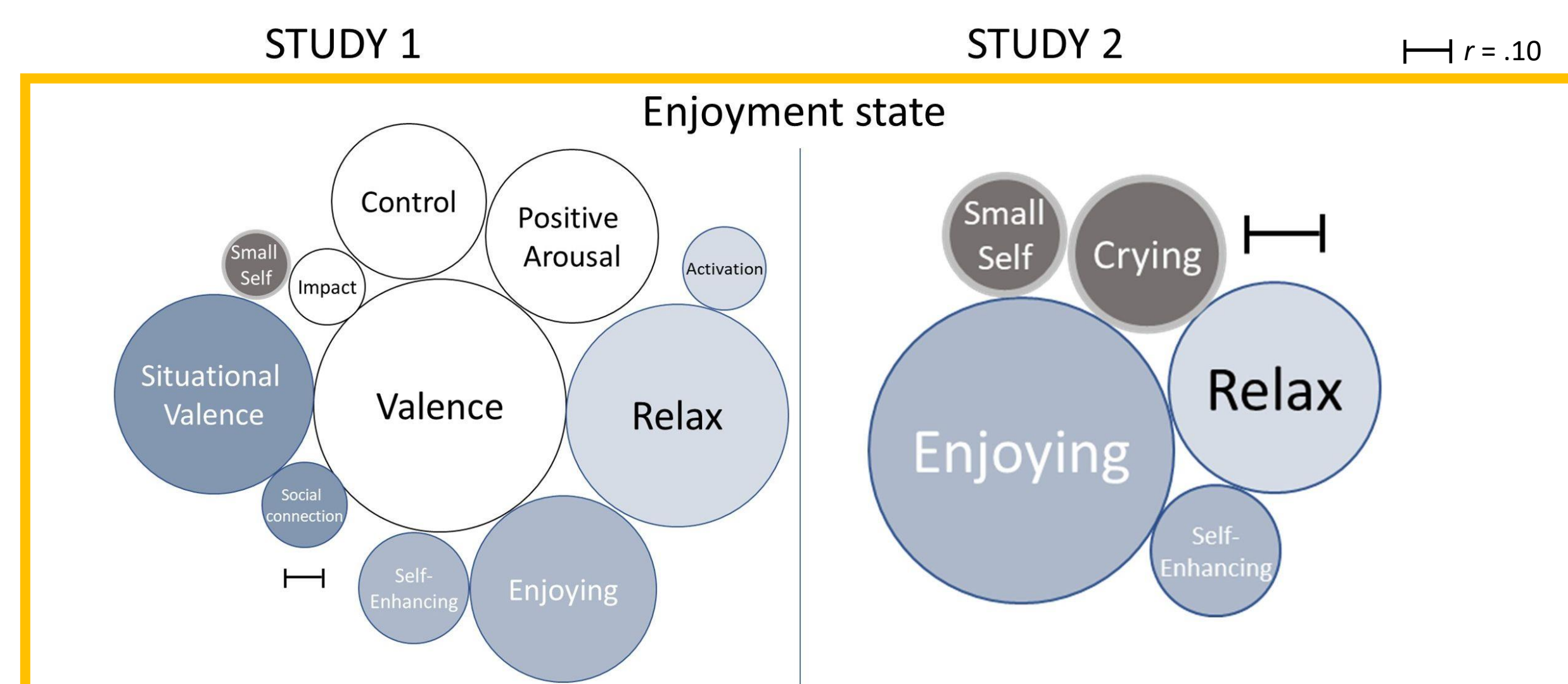
Two claims underlie this view:

- A) That self-centered and self-transcendent emotions belong to two distinct families
- B) That self-transcendent emotions all belong to the same family

They have **no empirical support**.

### METHODS

1.  $N_1 = 3113, N_2 = 1443$
2. Self-report of emotion labels and other affective components
3. Principal Component Analysis



**CONCLUSION** Self-transcendent emotions are divided into two different families that are distinct from self-centered emotions. Each family is characterized by a distinctive phenomenology.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Happiness_E	.764					
Joy_E	.757					
Enthusiasm_E	.715					
Grateful_E	.706	.455				
Thankful_E	.700	.458				
Excitement_E	.690				.471	
WellBeing_E	.675					
Contentment_E	.665					
Uplifted_E	.635	.325				
Appreciative_E	.625	.482				
Pride_E	.598					
Sadness_E	-.578		.425			
Amusement_E	-.549			.490		
Inspiration_E	.511	.449		.364		
Touched_E		.742				
Compassion_E		.730				
Moved_E		.715				
Tenderness_E		.660				
Love_E	.434	.610				
Respect_E	-.348	.608				
Outrage_E			.759			
Indignation_E			.729			
Hate_E			.715			
Disgust_E			.685			
Anger_E	-.444		.659			
Injustice_E	-.459		.644			
Contempt_E			.613			
Curious_E				.781		
Wonder_E	.322			.638		
Interest_E	.366	.324		.621		
Fascination_E	.473			.619		
Surprise_E				.528		
Awe_E				.492		
Nervous_E					.832	
Anxiety_E					.831	
Fear_E					.792	
Embarrassed_E		.320				.805
Shame_E						.784
Guilt_E						.686

Recall task  
6 self-transcendent emotions:  
Admiration, Awe, Being Moved, Compassion, Elevation, Gratitude;  
8 centered emotions:  
Amusement, Contempt, Disgust, Fear, Joy, Pride, Sadness, Surprise.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Touched_E	.898					
Tenderness_E	.855					
Love_E	.852					
Thankful_E	.832					
Moved_E	.829					
Compassion_E	.827					
Grateful_E	.825					
Uplifted_E	.805					
Appreciative_E	.784	.357				
Inspiration_E	.750	.423				
Respect_E	.726					
Admiration_E	.714	.423				
Joy_E	.705				.362	
WellBeing_E	.696					
Happiness_E	.691				.364	
Pride_E	.654					
Contentment_E	.479	.321			.324	
Fascination_E		.814				
Curious_E		.764				
Wonder_E	.372	.764				
Interest_E	.394	.690				
Awe_E	.489	.663				
Excitement_E	.402	.595			.417	
Enthusiasm_E	.528	.532			.363	
Surprise_E		.474				
Anger_E			.809			
Outrage_E			.770			
Disgust_E			.703			
Hate_E			.686			
Indignation_E			.656			
Injustice_E			.624			
Contempt_E			.505		.474	
Nervous_E				.845		
Anxiety_E				.828		
Fear_E				.801		
Sadness_E	.352	.348	.464		-.342	
Amusement_E					.683	
Shame_E		.381				.765
Embarrassed_E						.730
Guilt_E		.328				.715

Video clips  
3 self-transcendent emotions:  
Awe (Nature-elicited and Other-elicited), Being Moved, Elevation.  
1 self-centered emotion:  
Amusement;  
1 Neutral situation.

In study 2, the emotional space is better described by self-transcendent emotions because the stimuli triggering the emotions (the video clips) were all about someone/something beyond oneself.

Definitions of self-transcendent emotions:  
Van Cappellen (2017): "The term self-transcendence refers to a sense of reduced self-awareness and increased connectedness with others, which facilitates the emergence of prosocial behavior".  
Stellar et al. (2017): "Self-transcendent emotions [...] encourage individuals to transcend their own momentary needs and desires and focus on those of another".  
Shiota et al. (2014): "Self-transcendent emotions are thought to do the opposite [from other positive emotions], turning our minds outward rather than inward, encouraging us to transcend the self and its expectations".

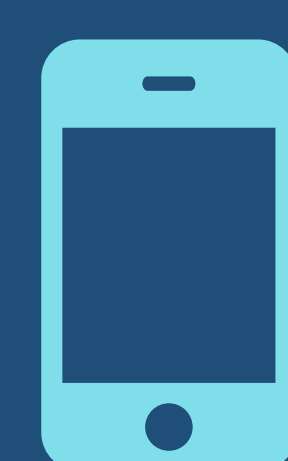
ABATISTA Angela, COVA Florian

\*References:

Shiota, M. N., Thrash, T. M., Danvers, A. F., & Dombrowski, J. (2014). Transcending the self: Awe, elevation, and inspiration. In M. M. Tugade, M. N. Shiota, & L. D. Kirby (Eds.), *Handbook of positive emotions*. (pp. 362–377). The Guilford Press. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/hkswj>

Stellar, J. E., Gordon, A. M., Piff, P. K., Cordero, D., Anderson, C. L., Bai, Y., Maruskin, L. A., & Keltner, D. (2017). Self-Transcendent Emotions and Their Social Functions: Compassion, Gratitude, and Awe Bind Us to Others Through Prosociality. *Emotion Review*, 9(3), 200–207. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916684557>

Van Cappellen, P. (2017). Rethinking self-transcendent positive emotions and religion: Insights from psychological and biblical research. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 9(3), 254–263. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000101>



Take a picture to download the full paper

